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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000310

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AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL ZI

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH GENERAL SOLOMON MUJURU

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with the Ambassador on April 10, General Solomon Mujuru gave no hint of his commonly-known differences with President Robert Mugabe, and little indication that Mugabe would consider stepping down. He acknowledged that sanctions (understood to be targeted and international financial institution (IFI) prohibitions on lending to Zimbabwe) are a major irritant to Zimbabwean officials. Mujuru suggested the best way to engage in dialogue with a view toward political and economic reform and normalization of relations between Zimbabwe and the West would be through SADC. On the elections, he expected the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to announce results within the next couple of days. He maintained there had been irregularities in vote tabulation, but blamed this on the ZEC rather than the MDC. END SUMMARY.

A Mugabe Exit and Sanctions

¶2. (C) The Ambassador told Mujuru that transition was important and that Mugabe should now become an elder statesman. The U.S. was willing to assist; if Mugabe left power, we would say the right things about Mugabe's service to his country, to the extent possible assist with his safety, and lift sanctions against him. Mujuru asked whether we would do the same for other government officials and high-ranking military personnel. The Ambassador replied affirmatively.

¶3. (C) Mujuru then expressed the hurt and indignity of sanctions. He and others felt like they were in a cage looking out, while the West was looking at them through a window. The sanctions also hurt financially; Mujuru said he had a relative that had over USD 7 million frozen in the U.S. With the removal of sanctions, Mujuru said, anything could be discussed. (COMMENT: Mujuru said he meant sanctions to include both targeted sanctions and IFI restrictions on

support for Zimbabwe. It was clear from the tenor of his remarks, however, that he and other officials were more focused on targeted sanctions which tie up their assets and prevent them from traveling to the West. END COMMENT.)

¶4. (C) The Ambassador queried as to whether Mugabe would agree to leave office with a promise that sanctions would then be lifted. Mujuru said Mugabe would not agree to this; sanctions had been imposed while Mugabe was president, he felt personally responsible, and his sense of honor required that they be removed while he was still president.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador then asked Mujuru whether there were any circumstances under which Mugabe would voluntarily leave office. Mujuru responded that there was a meeting next week (presumably including Mujuru and Mugabe) and the Ambassador should ask him after that meeting.

SADC Best Hope for Mediation

¶6. (C) The Ambassador asked Mujuru whether statesmen such as Kofi Annan or Colin Powell could play a useful role in talking to Mugabe. Mujuru responded that while Mugabe had respect for them and other elders, such as former Tanzanian President Mkapa and former Mozambique President Chissano, SADC would be the best possible mediator in trying to open a dialogue on transition. Specifically, he said Tanzanian President Kikwete, as head of the African Union, was well placed. He believed that Mugabe would be disposed to listen to SADC.

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On Elections and a Government of National Unity

¶7. (C) Mujuru said that ZANU-PF would be amenable to a government of national unity (GNU), but not one headed by Tsvangirai. Mujuru said he had nothing against

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Tsvangirai--in fact he had met with him last week--but

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Tsvangirai was junior to Mugabe and others. (COMMENT:

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Mujuru seemed to be saying that any GNU would have to be headed by ZANU-PF with the MDC and Tsvangirai as junior partners. END COMMENT.)

¶8. (C) Mujuru averred that voter fraud to the detriment of ZANU-PF had occurred during the election. He blamed it on ZEC polling supervisors, however, and not the MDC. A recount might be necessary. He suggested that in a runoff election the Army should supervise voting as it was a professional and independent body. The Ambassador commented that if the integrity of the election process was the issue, independent observers, for example from the Carter Center, could play an important role. Mujuru agreed.

¶9. (C) The Ambassador noted that since the election we had received reports of intimidation and violence in rural areas. Mujuru called this a "lie." Nobody had been hurt in the election--"How can they say these things now." He stated there would be a runoff and it would be fair. He expected the ZEC to release the results of the March 29 presidential election within the next couple of days.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Although we have reliable reports that Mujuru tried to move Mugabe out of the presidency late last year and that he backed Simba Makoni in the presidential election, Mujuru in this meeting gave no indication of a rift with Mugabe. He played the role of a senior ZANU-PF stalwart. Nevertheless, his suggestion that SADC become more directly involved was at least an implicit recognition that a transition must occur which would result in Mugabe leaving power.

¶11. (C) We have been trying for several months to arrange a meeting with Mujuru and have been told by intermediaries that Mujuru was reluctant to meet with us because of the sensitivity of the political situation. This meeting was facilitated by a business contact who told us that Mujuru initially declined the meeting. Although the substance of the meeting broke no new ground, the fact that he agreed to the meeting, and said he would welcome future meetings, may be an indication that he is genuinely interested in a transition and feels that the U.S. can play a role. Interestingly, he said it was appropriate to talk to the Americans, but he would not talk to the British. END COMMENT.

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